

*Encounters are grouped into "combat", "risky" and "low risk"
Numbers (e.g. +5 bond, -2 hp) can be balanced later

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

- These are written in order from super common to super rare.
- All of them launch straight into combat (which is why there is no "choices" section)
- Most have multiple options for intro text, since they're expected to repeat

Lichen

ID: 001

Biome: Any

Unique: No

Image Description: Generic relevant biome

Intro Text

1. As they pass through the trees, Aldric finishes an anecdote, and elicits too loud a laugh from Íde. A series of alarm calls ring out around them, and before the pair can ready their weapons, the wild folk descend!
2. Cutting through the thick underbrush, Íde fails to notice the tripwire before her. When she stumbles across it, white sparks pepper the air above the canopy! The companions groan, and ready themselves for a wild folk attack.
3. Aldric's heavy boot snaps a branch in two, cutting the forest soundscape with a sharp crack. The companions tense, watching for assailants-- and sure enough, a rock comes whizzing past Adric's ear! The pair hoist their weapons, preparing for a fight.

Cervid

ID: 002

Biome: Forest

Unique: No

Image Description: Glowing deer in a forest

Intro Text

1. Strange music weaves between the trees. Aldric and Íde stop, peering between the trunks for its source. In the distance, a ghostly procession of long-legged beasts halts-- then in unison, the creatures turn toward the pair.

2. Chiming tones dance past the companions' ears, betraying the presence of strange, antlered creatures which step delicately through the ferny underbrush. The creatures spot Íde and Aldric, and the music takes on a sinister tone.
3. Íde puts a hand on Aldric's arm, gesturing to a trio of slender, glowing creatures grazing in a clearing nearby. The creatures, which seem to sense the companions' presence, raise their antlered heads... and charge!

Slimedog

ID: 003

Biome: Swamp

Unique: No

Image Description: Angry dog with green drooling mouth in its chest in a swamp

Intro Text

1. A shadow falls across Íde and Aldric's muddy path. Looking up, they find a great black dog blocking their way, green slime dripping from a maw-like hole in its chest! Shackles raised and growling, it seems ready for battle.
2. As they pick their way through the marsh, a jibe from Íde raises a growl not from Aldric, but from something in the swamp. From the muck rises a great black hound, spitting green drool from a maw in its chest. Shaking itself dry, it pounces!

RISKY ENCOUNTERS

A Four-Legged Merchant

ID: 008

Unique: Yes

Biome: Swamp

Image Description: A malnourished black dog with its tongue lolling, sitting between two trees with one paw resting protectively over an open book.

Intro Text

A snapping twig draws the companions' attention-- it's a black hound, and for a moment the companions tense, expecting an attack. But the hound just cocks its head intelligently, and after a moment Íde notices something under its paw-- a strange tome, open and curiously unmarred by the dampness of the swamp. Does Íde:

Choices

1. Offer the dog some jerky. (-1 ration) (Risky)

Outcome:

-50%: The creature takes the meat gratefully, and removes its paw from the tome. Íde takes this as permission to pick up the book, compelled by a strange urge to slip her hand into its pages like she would a pool of water. Her fingertips come into contact with something, and from the book, she pulls an object!

+1 artifact

-50%: The dog growls at the puny offering-- the pair seems to have offended it! It snaps up the jerky and a bit of the hand that feeds it, before disappearing back into the swamp.

-2 hp to Íde

2. Shoot the dog, and take the tome. (-5 bond) (Sure Success)

Outcome: Íde pierces the thing's skull with an arrow, and it lets out a whine before toppling to the ground. The book shimmers, and disappears, leaving only the body of the dog.

+3 rations

+10 gold

3. Offer the dog some gold. (-10 gold) (Sure success)

Outcome:

The dog seems to grin. Taking the gold gingerly into its mouth, it steps away from the tome, allowing Íde to pick it up. When she looks up to thank it, she sees nothing but shadows in the trees. She shakes the book, turning it upside down, and from it falls an object! (+1 artifact)

Striding God

ID: 009

Unique: Yes

Biome: Forest

Image Description: An impossibly tall, thin, silvery glowing creature.

Intro Text

Aldric catches sight of a glint silvery light through the trees. Creeping closer, the companions find that it is an impossibly tall, thin creature the precise colour of a winter moon, striding through the trees. As they draw near, it halts, kneels, and peers down at them through the branches.

Choices

1. Fire at will! (Risky)

Outcome: Startled by the sudden proximity of such a large and unusual being, Íde looses an arrow. There is a blinding flash, and by the time Aldric and Íde regain their vision, the entity has disappeared.

-80% chance: The flash sears their irises, leaving them both in unnatural pain. They feel weak, and know that it will take some time to recover from this.

→ halves health

-20% chance: Surprisingly, the light has a cleansing quality to it. Aldric and Íde feel braced and refreshed! It seems the being was a benevolent one.

→ full health

2. Say hello. (Less Risky)

Outcome: Aldric hails the creature in a friendly voice.

-50% chance: The thing merely blinks at him, not seeming to understand. After a moment, it gets up and strides away, long legs carrying it faster than they can follow.

-30% chance: The entity smiles, seeming to understand Aldric's friendly intentions. A deep hum emanates from the creature, rumbling in the ground and the trees. Aldric and Íde can feel it in their chests, and it leaves them strangely comforted. The creature strides away on its long legs.

+3 hp

-20% chance: The creature reels back, seeming to mistake Aldric's tone for a threatening one. It unleashes a pure, high note, nearly deafening the companions-- then it flees on those impossibly long legs.

-2 hp

The Sybil

ID: 010

Unique: Yes

Biome: Forest

Image Description: Hut in the forest.

Intro Text

A stilted shack leans against the trunk of a great oak, windows bright with white light. Black smoke escapes in puffs from its chimney. Savoury smells waft toward Aldric and Íde, enticing them toward the little door.

Choices

1. Approach the shack and knock.

Outcome: Almost immediately, the door swings wide. Before them stands a woman, so bent in her old age that her nose is barely level with their navels. She gives them a gummy grin, then beckons them inside. When both start to enter, she stops them-- "Jushht one," she wheezes through her toothless mouth. What happens next?

1a. Íde pushes her way in. (-1 bond)

Outcome: Inside, Íde finds the shack hung with ornaments made from something which glows a bright white. The old woman takes a seat at a rickety table, gesturing to the chair across from her. Once Íde sits, the old woman spreads three cards before her. "You mussht chooshe." Does Íde choose:

-1a-1. The emerald serpent.

Outcome: The hag chuckles and flips over the card. Immediately, Íde feels a sharp sting at her ankle. Upon inspection, she finds two new puncture wounds glistening with venom. She feels it coursing through her veins, bringing both pain and new strength.

-5 hp

+1 action point in battle

-1a-2. The golden cup.

Outcome: The hag lifts the card from the table. From it pours a pile of gold coins. When Íde goes to pick them up, they burn her fingertips-- but soon they are cool enough to sweep into her pouch.

-5 hp

+15 gold

-1a-3. The bloody heart.

Outcome: The hag eyes Íde for a moment... before reaching across the table and into her chest. "You won't need thissh where you are going."

-2 max hp

1b. Aldric pushes his way in. (-1 bond)

Outcome: Inside, Aldric finds the shack hung with ornaments made from something which glows a bright white. The old woman takes a seat at a rickety table, gesturing to the chair across from her. Once Aldric sits, the old woman spreads three cards before her. "You mussht chooshe." Does Aldric choose:

-1a-1. The silver flask.

Outcome: The hag grins and pulls the flask from the card. She hands it to Aldric, and hesitantly, he takes a swig. With every gulp, he feels his pockets growing lighter-- but he feels better than he ever has before.

+ to full hp, +2 to max hp.

-all gold

-1a-2. The scarlet apple.

Outcome: The hag nods knowingly, and hands the card to Aldric. When he takes it, she jabs his thumb with one of her yellowed nails, and shows him how to press his blood into the card. Instantly, his stomach fills. "Keep it," she says. "Be full."

-1 hp

+3 extra rations whenever they stop to hunt

-1a-3. The obsidian sword.

Outcome: The hag tilts her head back and laughs... before leaning quickly over the table and gripping the hilt of Aldric's blade. His vision goes dark for a moment, and when it returns, he is back outside with Íde-- but his sword arm feels weak.

-1 action point

2. Peer through the window.

Outcome: They spot a little old woman, sitting at a table and staring expectantly at the door. *(remove this option and go back to previous options)*

Temporal Arch

ID: 011

Unique: Yes

Biome: Ruins

Image Description: Crumbling ruins surround an arch that is mysteriously intact.

Intro Text

The party stumbles upon the ruins of a town, in the middle of which stands a curiously intact archway. Driven by curiosity or some supernatural force, Aldric and Íde step through.

The moment they cross the threshold, the clearing brightens; where once dull clouds had obscured a falling sun, yellow midday light now falls upon a now-intact town square! The sounds of a bustling crowd fills the companions' ears, though not a

person is to be seen. Despite the strange circumstance, three shops catch their eyes. Do Íde and Aldric:

Choices

1. Enter the tavern.

Outcome: Though the tavern appears empty, the companions are greeted by the sounds of music and raucous laughter. At the bar, a pair of tankards gleam, empty. On the counter is a smattering of coin. Do the pair:

1a. Take the coin. (+10 gold)

Outcome:

-50% chance: The tavern goes black, and the joyful sounds fade. Just as the pair feel they ought to panic, they find themselves standing once more in the dully-lit and ruined town, next to a now-crumbling archway.

-50% chance: A sensation like burning acid overcomes the companions as they feel themselves ripped forward in time and spat back out into the ruins. Though their pockets are heavy, their bodies feel weak.

→ Half hp

1b. Pay up. (-5 gold)

Outcome:

As soon as their coin touches the counter, the tankards fill magically with an amber liquid, and the pair drink merrily together for a while, exchanging tales and singing along to the music. As soon as their glasses are emptied, they are spat back out into the ruins, giggling slightly from the drink.

→ Full bond

2. Enter the apothecary.

Outcome: Though the apothecary appears empty, there are the sounds of shuffling feet and clinking glass. Upon the counter sit a pair of empty potion bottles, labelled "For Good Health". A smattering of coin also decorates the gleaming wood. Do the pair:

2a. Take the coin. (+10 gold)

Outcome:

-50% chance: The apothecary goes black, and the joyful sounds fade. Just as the pair feel they ought to panic, they find themselves standing once more in the dully-lit and ruined town, next to a now-crumbling archway.

-50% chance: A sensation like burning acid overcomes the companions as they feel themselves ripped forward in time and spat back out into the ruins. Though their pockets are heavy, their bodies feel weak.

→ Half hp

2b. Pay up. (-5 gold)

Outcome:

As soon as their coin touches the counter, the bottles fill with a gleaming red liquid. Íde and Aldric toast, and down the contents. Instantly they feel refreshed and vitalized, though when they look around, they find themselves among the ruins once more.

→ Full hp

3. Enter the bakery.

Outcome: Though the bakery appears empty, the warm scent of baking bread fills their noses. Upon the counter sits an empty platter, along with a smattering of coin. Do the companions:

3a. Take the coin. (+10 gold)

Outcome:

-50% chance: The bakery goes black, and the joyful sounds fade. Just as the pair feel they ought to panic, they find themselves standing once more in the dully-lit and ruined town, next to a now-crumbling archway.

-50% chance: A sensation like burning acid overcomes the companions as they feel themselves ripped forward in time and spat back out into the ruins. Though their pockets are heavy, their bodies feel weak.

→ Half hp

3b. Pay up. (-5 gold)

Outcome:

As soon as their coin touches the counter, the tray is full of breads, pastries, and cakes! The companions fill their bellies joyfully, though as the last crumb leaves the platter they find themselves among the ruins once more.

+10 rations

Titanpoint

ID: 012

Unique: Yes

Biome: Forest

Image Description: A stony formation which looks suspiciously like an enormous pointing hand, crawling with Lichen.

Intro Text

The companions pass through a tall stand of trees, and find on the other side a steep rocky hill veined through with blue-glowing stone. Only once they are too close to

flee do Aldric and Íde notice that the hill is crawling with wild folk, who are chipping at the blue stone with makeshift tools. Do the companions:

Choices

1. Approach them peacefully. (Risky)

Outcome: Íde and Aldric walk tentatively up to the wild folk, only one of whom seems willing to stop what it is doing long enough to acknowledge them. It holds its hands out, seeming to demand a toll. Do the pair:

1a. Pay up. (-8 gold)

Outcome: Satisfied, the creature goes back to its digging, and the rest of the wildfolk go unalerted. The companions pass the bluff unscathed.

1b. Draw their weapons! (Initiates Combat)

The wild folk begin to chitter, and a few of their number leap in for the attack!

2. Attack! (Initiates Combat)

Outcome: The wild folk begin to chitter, and a few of their number ready their defences.

3. *(If player has the Shard of the Star artifact)* Hold the Shard of the Star aloft and walk towards them.

Outcome: As the companions approach, the shard begins to glow a bright white! To Aldric and Íde's surprise, so does the blue stone embedded in the hill. The wild folk drop the rocks they had been harvesting, looking around in confusion. One steps forward.

"That thing in your grasp-- we need it. The earth is a dark place, so far from the sky. Will you give it to us, that we may drive the darkness from our heads?"

Do the companions:

3a. Give them the Shard of the Star (-that relic)

Outcome: The creature nods gratefully, clutching the Shard to its chest. "The Lichen are in your debt." It gestures to one of its underlings-- a shaman, who steps forward and places a hand on each of the companions foreheads. A cleansing energy courses through their bodies, and the pair leave the Lichen knowing that they have done a good thing.

→ Full health

→ Full bond

3b. Refuse.

Outcome: The creature shakes its head in disappointment. "You hoard what was never yours. This is why the Titanfather's Star fades... selfish acts by ignorant outsiders. Leave us be."

As soon as the Shard of the Star is out of eyesight, the wild folk seem to lose focus, and begin to chip away at the blue stone once more. Íde and Aldric's guts sink at the sight, and they know they have done a terrible thing.

→ Empties bond

Living Wells

ID: 013

Unique: No

Biome: Any

Image Description: Generic biome

Intro Text

[In Forest] As they walk through the forest, Íde spots something strange: an ordinary stone well, with a tree half-growing out of it! There is a strange quality to it, almost as though it is breathing. Do the companions:

[In Swamp] So focused are they on their path through the muck that Aldric and Íde hardly notice the stone well before they are upon it! Completely out of place as it is so far from civilization, it seems almost to watch them as they deliberate. Do the companions:

[In Ruins] Íde and Aldric come upon the ruins of a village. Amidst the crumbling houses stands an ordinary well, perfectly upright and made of a stone which contrasts that of the ruins. The ropes which hold the bucket swing invitingly, though there is no wind. Do the companions:

Choices

1. Toss in some coin. (~5 gold)

Outcome: The pair hear their gold hit the water far below, and when the well gurgles slightly in response, it sounds almost like a purr. The bucket draws itself up, and when they peer inside, they find that it is not empty!

-80% chance-- Cool, clear water sparkles unnaturally in the dull light of the swamp. Upon drinking it, Aldric and Íde feel refreshed! (+5 hp)
-20% chance-- Nestled in the bucket is an unusual-looking object! (+1 relic)

2. Draw up the bucket.

Outcome: The companions turn the crank, drawing up the bucket, though when it drags along the side of the well it sounds almost like a growl. When at last they can reach it, the companions find that the bucket is not empty!

-80% chance-- Cool, clear water sparkles unnaturally in the dull light of the swamp. However, upon drinking it, Aldric and Íde feel a bit ill. (-5 hp)
-20% chance-- Nestled in the bucket is an unusual-looking object! (+1 relic)

Hero's Pack

ID: 014

Unique: No?

Biome: Swamp

Trigger: *Have fought Lichen at least once!*

Image Description: Generic swamp

Intro Text

Wearied by the day's trek, Adric stumbles over a leather pack, very similar to the ones the companions themselves carry. Hoping to find something useful, the companions open it.

Outcome:

-50% As they dig through the pack, the pair are unsettled by how alike its contents are to their own travelling satchels. Someone just like them had been through this way... but what had happened to them?

-5 bond

+5 rations

+5 gold

-50% Upon rifling through the mysterious pack, the companions find a journal. Aldric skims it, while Íde continues to dig through the satchel.

"It says here that this adventurer was able to liaise with the folk of this valley, and that they call themselves the Lichen. Strange name, don't you think? I wonder what happened, to make them so hostile..."

Íde looks up. "Does it matter? Focus on the mission, old ma-- oh! Look at this!" Íde holds up an object she had pulled from the bottom of the bag.

+1 relic

Homemaker

ID: 015

Unique: Yes

Biome: Ruins

Image Description: Generic Ruins (or ruins with standing door if time)

Intro Text

The companions pick their way through some ruins, nearly making it through before they spot a strange sight. In the remains of a home stands a leaning stone doorframe. In it, a makeshift wooden door swings off of broken hinges. Do the companions:

1. Knock on the door.

Outcome: From beyond the door a voice cries, "Do come in!" The companions enter, and find a waifish young woman standing amidst makeshift furniture, arranged into a child's-drawing semblance of a dining room.

"I've made us some supper!" The woman clutches at a white-glowing amulet around her neck, and gestures for them to sit. Tree-bark plates sit at each place setting, piled high with dirt, leaves, insects, and acorns. The woman smiles tremulously. "Eat up!" Do Ide and Aldric:

1a. Eat what is on the plates. (-5 hp)

Outcome: The young woman watches with delight as the companions make their way through "supper". When they finish, the young woman claps. "Oh good job, clean plates deserves a reward! Here, have this little toy I found." The woman hands Aldric a strange object with her filthy hands.

+1 relic

1b. Politely decline.

Outcome: The woman begins to tear up. "You... you don't like the supper I have made you? Then... just go! I'll eat it all myself!" She sits down and begins to shovel leaves and dirt into her mouth. The companions leave without a word, feeling a bit disturbed.

-5 bond

2. Open the door.

Outcome: The companions enter, and find a waifish young woman standing amidst makeshift furniture, arranged into a child's-drawing semblance of a dining room. A young woman is standing in the middle, clutching her chest in shock at the sight of them. "I never! Such poor manners. Well, since you're here, you may as well eat." She gestures at tree-bark plates set at each place setting, piled high with dirt, leaves, insects, and acorns.

→ Same choices as above

LOW-RISK ENCOUNTERS

The Librarian

ID: 016

Unique: Yes (super rare)

Biome: Ruins

Image Description: Generic ruins

Intro Text

The ruin of a great pillared building stands at the far end of what must once have been a city square. Though the crumbling buildings around it are dark, a gentle blue light issues from its entrance. The companions enter, drawn to it.

Glancing around, they find themselves surrounded by tall shelves, which are stacked high with stone tablets. Íde pulls one down, and finds it covered in a strange, glowing runic cant. Before she or Aldric can attempt to decipher it, a cough rings out from behind them.

Turning to face the source of the noise, the pair find a prim, middle-aged man standing behind them with one eyebrow raised, fingering a glowing white object at his belt as one might fidget with a pocket watch.

He mutters to himself. "It's always outsiders visiting these halls. When the locals lost their interest in reading, I couldn't say, but colour me disappointed." He shakes his head, before seeming to recall Aldric and Íde's presence. "Well? What is your question?"

Choices

1. Ask no questions.

Outcome: The companions would rather carry on with their adventuring than waste time on such silly things as knowledge.

2. Ask about the wild folk.

Outcome: Aldric steps forward. "Why do the valley inhabitants behave so strangely? Many of them attack us, and the others are... er... odd."

The man blinks. "They've been attacking you? Oh dear, things are worse than I had expected..."

Muttering to himself, he wanders over to a shelf and pulls a particularly large tablet down. With a series of incantations, he seems to pull the glowing symbols from it, spreading them before him in the air. Then he sets to reading.

'Before the Furrow was the Furrow, there were Lichen. They were a people who once populated the great hilly backs of slow-striding creatures called titans, in the days when these great entities still walked with their heads above the clouds. These folk drew long life from their proximity to the titans, just as time stretches in the presence of an object of great mass. The Lichen had powers of divination, for they of all folk in the world lived closest to the stars.

But as human populations on the ground grew and multiplied, the titans found themselves with less and less space to wander, and laid themselves down to sleep.

The Lichen, who had for so long lived on the backs of these titans, were forced to the earth in the Grounding. They salvaged what they could of the homes they had made in the sky, and rebuilt their civilization on the ground. For a time, they were fine. They adapted to earthbound life, domesticating valley creatures to guard against the strange beasts and spirits that roamed the earth. But their distance from the stars wore on them; first, they lost their powers of divinity. Then, they started to lose their minds, and their civilizations crumbled into wanderers and tribes.

Only those lucky enough to find a piece of starlight kept any semblance of their sanity; the rest scavenge the blue veins of the titans, for a titan's blood is made up of diluted starlight. But it is not enough. It will never be enough."

Then the man snaps his fingers, and the tablet is just a tablet once more. "Be gone," he says. "Use what you have learned."

3. Ask about the tower.

Outcome: Ide steps forward. "We seek to climb the great tower at the north end of the valley. What can you tell us about it?"

The man gives her an unimpressed glance. "You, just like every outsider, don't even know what it is you walk toward. Such a strange advent, making pilgrimages to a place you had no hand in building. Very well."

Muttering, the man pulls a long, thin tablet from a low shelf. Clearing his throat, he makes a motion and seems to pull the symbols from the stone, fanning them in the air before him. Then, he begins to read.

"Tucked deep into a remote mountain range is a long, thin valley, which if viewed from above would look like the deep furrow of a staff dragged through the dirt. At the far end of the valley stands an impossibly tall white tower. Halfway up, an outcropping from one of the surrounding mountains grips it almost like a fist; at the top, something gleams silvery-white.

The valley is called the Furrow, and folk traverse its many perils in order to reach that tower, and retrieve a piece of starlight from the star at the top. This trek is renowned for its near-impossibility, and only the bravest of heroes attempt it. But these outsiders have little understanding of just what exactly the Furrow is: a place formed by Titans, when they laid themselves down to sleep.

Only the Titanfather remains awake, watching over its sleeping charges with its great star-topped scepter in hand. It is this scepter that visiting heroes climb, and the star at the top is dwindles as adventuring heros pick it apart, piece by piece. Lighthouse to the valley's native folk, symbol of their past and future, reduced to souvenirs and bragging rights by people who know not what they hold."

The man slams his hand down on the tablet, and the symbols swirl down and affix themselves to it once more. He sniffs disdainfully. "I may have added that last sentence myself." He puts the tablet away, and when he turns back to face them he seems surprised to find them still standing there. "Well? Go! You have a star to despoil!"

Waystone

ID: 017

Unique: No

Biome: Any

Image Description: Standing stone run through with glowing blue titan veins, carved with blue symbols.

Intro Text

Aldric and Ide find a great, carved stone, stuck deep into the earth and jutting high enough to see from miles away. The symbols are unreadable... The pair take a short rest in silence, contemplating the mystery of the waystones. Who put them in place? What are they marking? Are they a sign, or a warning?

Hilt Hill

ID: 018

Unique: Yes

Biome: Forest

Image Description: A strange structure at the crest of a hill which appears to be the hilt of an enormous sword.

Intro Text

Ide and Aldric crest a hill to find an odd structure nestled into the trees at the top. It has no windows or doors, and there is no writing carved into its surface. Only when Aldric stops and looks back at it from the bottom of the hill does he notice that it looks almost like the hilt of an enormous sword, stuck into the earth.

Song for the Mad

ID: 019

Unique: Yes

Biome: Forest

Image Description: Generic forest

Intro Text

As Ide and Aldric weave through the trees, the wind carries an odd sound to them. Loud, virtuosic singing, with lyrics they can't quite make out. Peering into a nearby clearing for the source of the song, they make out a brightly dressed person, singing to a ring of blue-glowing stones. From the tip of their odd little hat dangles a glowing white bauble, which they brush from their eyes whenever they move their head. Do the companions:

Choices

1. Listen from afar.

Outcome: The duo stay hidden in the copse of trees, catching only the last half of the little person's song.

*--With our hands and axes sharp
We tear the friends we loved apart
For though they bore us through the sky
Now blue stones over all we prize.*

2. Step closer and request a song.

Outcome: The pair step into the clearing, and the little bard halts their song. "More audience members! Please, take a seat at the back. Come to request a song? Perfect! I'll choose one for you."

The colourful person strikes a chord on an imaginary instrument, and launches into their song.

*Tallest e'er to brush the stars,
The titans wandered near and far,
Great footfalls shapèd land and shore,
Where ne'er man had walked before.*

*But men are wont to stretch their legs,
And empty land for settlement begs;
And so the people on the ground
Took as their own the lands they found.*

*So Titans with their heavy feet
Did to the last free lands retreat.
Upon the earth they laid their heads
Made mountain, bluff, and hill their beds.*

*The Titanfather too made rest,
Though still he sits at Furrow's crest;
He watcheth o'er his sleeping kin,
And waiteth for the end of men.*

The little bard finishes the song with a flourish. "I know, I know, those last two lines don't quite rhyme. But do you know how difficult it is to make words behave when your own mind fights you?"

Aldric and Ide thank the colourful person for their music, and continue their journey northward with heads spinning at what they had learned.

+max bond

Overgrown Garden

ID: 020

Unique: Yes

Biome: Ruins? Forest?

Image Description: Generic ruins (unless time, then pretty garden)

Intro Text

Stumbling across the ruins of a little homestead, Aldric and Ide find a beautiful, overgrown garden. It is vast and labyrinthine, but at the center of the mess, the companions can see trees heavy with ripened fruit. Do the companions:

Choice:

1. Admire the garden, but move on.

Outcome: The garden is very beautiful, but the companions can't afford to navigate the maze toward the fruit trees in the middle.

2. Take the time to reach the fruit trees. (Darkness advances one extra space)

Outcome: Driven by their rumbling bellies, Aldric and Ide take a few hours and cut through the maze to the fruit trees in the middle.

+6 rations

Swampwater

ID: 021

Unique: Yes

Biome: Swamp

Image Description: Generic swamp probably

Intro:

Aldric and Ide skirt an oddly round, rocky hill, which juts out from the surrounding mountains. It seems out of place in the flat landscape of the swamp, and when they reach the other side of the hill, they see that it has been carved to look like a great

stone face on its side, eyes shut and mouth open. From its mouth trickles strangely thick, oozing water, which mixes with the mud of the swamp. The companions pick around it, slightly disturbed, before moving on.

Returning Hero

ID: 022

Unique: Yes

Biome: Swamp

Image Description: Generic swamp probably

Intro:

The companions halt for a moment as through the buzz of insects they hear approaching footsteps in the mud. From the haze strides a goateed man, bearing a pair of scimitars.

"Ah! Fellow adventurers, I take it. I'm sorry to say I just came from where you're going, and if I were you, I'd give up right now. Something strange is happening at the top of the tower... I think it's best to stay away. Here!"

The man tosses a bag to Aldric. "I've got more than enough food, some old witch made sure of that. I can see in your eyes you're not planning to turn back, so you'll be needing it more than I. Good luck!"

And before Aldric and Ide can utter another word, the man is off, stepping past them and vanishing into the murky distance.

+5 rations

Parade of Spirits

ID: 023

Unique: Yes

Biome: forest

Image Description: Generic forest probably

Intro:

Ide and Aldric pause for a moment under the shade of a great tree with a trunk wider than most houses. Aldric inspects it idly, and notices that the fungus which rings the trunk seems to form tiny stairs. Upon even closer inspection, he finds that

what he thought were beetles are indeed tiny, plump, iridescent spirits, parading in a line up the fungus stairs.

He shows Ide. "Where do you suppose they're going?"
Ide shrugs. "Upward, I suppose."

Aldric grins suddenly. "I wonder if this is what we look like to the gods, trekking one after another up that white tower."

+2 bond

Sleeping Willow

ID: 024

Unique: Yes

Biome: Forest

Image Description: Generic forest probably

Intro:

Deep in the forest, the duo comes across a slender willow, which sways gently though there is no wind. As they approach, Ide notices a gentle sound issuing from the tree-- an unmistakable snore. Do the companions:

Choices

1. Slap it awake.

Outcome: Ide ventures closer, glances at Aldric for reassurance, and slaps the tree across the trunk like a scorned lover. It sputters awake with an indignant sound, then blinks up at Ide with its knot-eyes.

"Ah! Thank you, I had overslept!"

With a great rending sound, it pulls itself up from the earth and begins to waddle away. But before it gets very far, it pauses and digs through its branches for a moment. "For your trouble," it explains, as it tosses the object to Aldric and Ide.

+1 relic

2. Splash some water on it. (-1 ration)

Outcome: Water drips down the trunk and into the soil, but nothing seems to happen. Perhaps the companions had imagined the sound...

3. Leave it be.

Outcome: Sometimes it is better to let sleeping trees lie.

Cavern

ID: 025

Unique: Yes

Biome: Forest

Image Description: Generic forest probably

Intro:

Aldric and Ide stumble into a clearing, on the other side of which is a dark opening in the side of an oddly-shaped hill. Driven by curiosity, the companions step inside, and find themselves presented with two tunnels. Do they:

Choices:

1. Take the left tunnel.

Outcome: Ide starts walking down the left tunnel, and with a sigh, Aldric follows. It dips downward slightly, and they soon find themselves wading waist-deep through unusually lugubrious water. At last, the tunnel widens into a broad cavern, and Aldric lets out a gasp. The entire cavern, floor to ceiling, is covered with glowing blue stone. The pair just stand together in silence for a while, taking in the beautiful sight. +5 bond.

2. Take the right tunnel.

Outcome: Aldric marches down the right tunnel, and Ide follows with a roll of her eyes. Tiny pathways begin to branch outward from the tunnel, too small for entry, and the rock around them becomes porous. The air feels purer here, and for a while the companions let themselves relax, breathing it in. They leave after a while, feeling revitalized and fresh. +5 hp

TOWER ENCOUNTERS

Tower's Base

ID: 027

Unique: Yes

Biome: Tower

Image Description:

Intro Text

The heroes stand before the great white base of the tower, staring up at its impossible height. In front of them gapes an arched doorway, waiting like an open mouth for their approach. With a single glance passed between them, they step forward-- and into the entrance hall.

Entrance Hall

ID: 028

Unique: Yes

Biome: Tower

Image Description:

Intro Text

As soon as the companions cross the threshold into the tower, all sounds of the world outside halt as though swallowed. Glancing back, they find that the doorway they had just stepped through has vanished, leaving only a smooth white expanse of stone. Glancing forward, two new doors beckon where before there were none.

Choices

1. Go through the small, crooked wooden door..

Outcome: Ducking through the tiny doorway, Aldric and Ide find themselves in a quaint, tidy kitchen.

Aldric steps forward, glancing around in wonder. "I'm... home..."

Seeming no longer to see Ide beside him, he moves to the washbasin in front of the window, and begins to scrub at the dishes which had been soaking in steaming water, humming a folk melody under his breath.

Does Ide:

1a. Tug at Aldric's arm, dragging him forcibly from the room.

Outcome: It takes some effort, but Ide manages to wrestle Aldric away from the sink and out of the kitchen. Back in the entrance hall, he pants, bent double; Ide steps away to give him space as something like a sob escapes him. When at last he straightens, he looks drawn and spread thin somehow.
-2 max hp

1b. Help him finish his chore.

Outcome: A few peaceful moments pass as together the companions wash and dry impossible dishes in an impossible kitchen. Only once the chore is done does Aldric seem to see Ide, allowing her to guide him from the room. There is a warm, bolstered look in his eyes now, like someone who had just run into an old friend.
+2 max hp

2. Go through large, gleaming gilded door.

Outcome: Pushing open the heavy doors, Ide and Aldric find themselves in a high-ceilinged library.

Ide's breath catches. "I'm... home..."

Seeming no longer to see Aldric, Ide takes a seat at a small table, sitting more primly than ever he had seen her, and opening a book titled *The Empyre's Hystorys, Adapted for Womenfolke*. She begins to take notes, brow furrowed.

Does Aldric:

2a. Pull Ide from the table, dragging her forcibly from the room.

Outcome: With some difficulty, Aldric manages to extract Ide from her reading, and throw her back out into the entrance hall. Surfacing from her trance, Ide thanks Aldric with something like relief in her voice. The set of her shoulders straightens with renewed determination.
+2 max hp

2b. Join her in reading.

Outcome: Hoping that the trance will pass with time, Aldric finds his own book and sets to waiting. However, as Ide reads, she becomes more and more agitated, her notes more and more frantic. At last she slams the book shut, flinging it against a wall and storming from the room. When Aldric joins her in the entrance hall, there is a defeated look about her..

-2 max hp

AFTER ALL OUTCOMES:

Turning back to face the entrance hall, they find that the two doors are gone; in their place is a wide staircase, leading toward a single archway.

Split Corridor

ID: 029

Unique: Yes

Biome: Tower

Image Description:

Intro Text

Upon walking through the archway at the top of the stairs, the companions find a wide white corridor, which splits into two after a few strides. From the fork to the left issues the smell of flowers and of green growing things; from the fork to the right pour the sounds of crackling fire, and the raucous shouting of men.

Choices:

1. Take the left fork.

Outcome: The pair treads down the corridor to the left, blinded by the bright sunlight which floods it. At its end, they find themselves passing not into a chamber, but into a bright, lush garden. Resting on a bench in the centre is an old man in a straw hat, with large, tanned forearms and twinkling eyes.

Ide gasps, and runs to him. "Mac!"

"My Lady! You want a story, I assume?" He pats the bench beside him. Ide sits.

Does Aldric:

1a. Step forward and introduce himself.

Outcome: As soon as the old gardener sees Aldric, he drops to his knees. "C-commander!" He sputters, forgetting Ide's presence. "This is... an honour!"

As Ide's oldest friend gushes on about his admiration for Aldric, the latter glances around for Ide, and finds her stalking toward a topiary tunnel.

By the time Aldric extricates himself and joins her in the white chamber beyond, her jealousy has dissolved into dejection, and Aldric can see the confidence draining from her.

-1 AP to Ide

1b. Hang back and watch.

Outcome: Ide grins, more widely than Aldric had ever seen. "Actually, it is I with a story to share!"

And she tells the gardener of her adventures in the Furrow. He laughs and claps and gasps, and Ide revels in it.

When at last she remembers herself, she glances back at Aldric, and gestures him forward. "We must go," she says to the old gardener. "Our adventure is not over." And they head for the white chamber beyond, the old man's admiring eyes on Ide for once, instead of Aldric.

+1 AP to Ide

2. Take the right fork..

Outcome: The pair treads down the corridor to the right, drawn by flickering firelight. At its end, they find themselves passing not into a chamber, but into a wide field with stars overhead, dotted with campfires and tents. At its center beside the largest tent is an enormous bonfire, silhouetting a broad woman with a sword.

Aldric lets out a shaky breath. "Commander?" He strides unsteadily toward her.

"Ah, young Aldric! Looking for some training, I assume."

Does Ide:

1. Step forward and introduce herself.

Outcome: The broad woman looks Ide up and down. "See this, young Aldric! Take note, this is what a warrior looks like!"

Ide gapes, and waits for Aldric's outrage. But instead, he tips back his head and laughs. "Too true! It's good to see you again, commander... I never thought I would."

The commander gives him an odd look, and he claps her on the shoulder. Before she can react, he strides off across the camp and into a tent. Emerging past the flap into the white chamber beyond, Ide notes that he looks stronger now, as though something in him has been resolved.

+1AP to Aldric

2. Hang back and watch.

Outcome: Aldric stutters incomprehensibly for a moment. "Come on, boy! Quit babbling and make something of yourself! The war needs you, the Empire needs you!"

Aldric goes stiff, the words ringing him like a bell. "I know," he says, and his voice drips with something dark and very cold. "I know it does." He steps away from her, and her mouth tightens in a frown.

Ide follows him past the flap of a tent, and finds him standing in a white chamber beyond. Unsure of what to say, she merely watches as defeat rolls off him in waves.

-1AP to Aldric

Spiral

ID: 030

Unique: Yes

Biome: Tower

Image Description:

Intro Text

Looking around the white chamber, the duo find a pair of identical spiral staircases-- one on the west side of the room, and one on the east. From the top of the west staircase, a screeching roar sounds; from the top of the east, a deep rumble, and the sounds of fire and shouting.

Choices:

1. Climb the west staircase.

Outcome: The pair venture tentatively up toward the sound of the roar. The staircase widens, and widens, and flattens until suddenly they find themselves standing in an alley. A shadow passes above, and with another ear-rending screech, a great green wyrm lands with a slithering thud before them, blocking their path forward.

Ide lets out a near-feral growl. "You!"

She steps forward, readying her weapon-- and finds that it has transformed into an ordinary wooden bow, strung with gut and awaiting an arrow. She falters, reaching for a quiver she knows will be empty.

Does Aldric:

1a. Draw his sword and charge.

Outcome: Aldric bowls past Ide, leaping at the wyrm. They tangle in a fierce battle, and within moments he is standing over the smoking corpse of his vanquished foe.

Pulling the sword from the wyrm's neck, he glances back at Ide, and finds her still standing there with an un-nocked bow in hand, frozen with fear. At his coaxing, she moves stiffly past the fallen wyrm, but in her face he can read only shame.

PUNISHMENT, UNKNOWN

Beyond the alley, they find themselves within a white, treeless courtyard.

1b. Wait for Ide to take action.

Outcome: Aldric watches Ide, sensing perhaps that this battle is a personal one. She squares her shoulders, and draws the arrowless string of her bow back, letting light gather in her palm before releasing a blazing shaft toward the wyrm. It falls with a single shot through the temple.

When she stows her bow, the weapon has returned to its customary arcane design. She glances at Aldric. "This memory is a difficult one... but it had to be made alone."

REWARD, UNKNOWN

Beyond the alley, they find themselves within a white, treeless courtyard.

2. Climb the east staircase.

Outcome: The pair venture tentatively up toward the rumbling and the grunts. The staircase widens, and widens, and flattens until suddenly they find themselves in a wide field dotted with tents lit ablaze as soldiers fight and cower and die. Beside the bonfire at the centre of camp stands a great horned demon, gripping the broken body of a broad woman.

Aldric sprints forward, sword drawn but not yet blazing. "COMMANDER!"

Before Ide can make a move, Aldric and the demon are engaged in a fierce battle. Aldric's sword still is not alight, and it is clear that his attacks are doing little to wound the great demon.

Does Ide:

2a. Draw her bow and fire.

Outcome: After a moment's hesitation, Ide looses a shaft of light at the demon, striking it squarely in its chest. It lets out a gurgling growl, and swivels its great head toward her.

It drops the commander's body onto the bonfire as it begins to make for Ide. Aldric lets out a howl of anguish, and at last his sword flames blue. He plunges it into the beast's back, and the demon crumples. He glances up at Ide, and his burning expression turns to gratitude. "The first time I did this, I did it alone. I prefer this version of events."

REWARD, UNKNOWN

The field dissolves into a white, treeless courtyard.

2b. Let Aldric fight alone.

Outcome: Ide watches, and waits, sensing that this demon is one from Aldric's past. The pair continue to battle, before the demon drops the commander's body onto the bonfire.

Aldric plunges his ordinary metal sword into the ground with a roar of anguish, engulfing himself and the demon in blue flame. When at last the blaze dies down, Aldric kneels over his vanquished foe, a haunted look in his eye. His shoulders tremble as he stands, having relived the darkest moment of his life.

PUNISHMENT, UNKNOWN

The field dissolves into a white, treeless courtyard.

Courtyard

ID: 031

Unique: Yes

Biome: Tower

Image Description:

Intro Text

The companions gather themselves before glancing around the courtyard to get their bearings. Before them is a wide platform with a single nondescript, humanoid statue upon it, a hand-shaped indent in its chest. Anchored into the plinth are chains, which look as though they are meant to raise it up through the skylight above.

Choices:

1. Send Ide forth to activate the chains.

Outcome: Ide steps forward onto the platform, and presses her hand into the indent. The statue seems to shiver, before it straightens, morphs and stands in front of Ide-- a perfect white replica of the archer herself. Ide jumps back in surprise, and the thing does the same. There is something incredibly off-putting about it.

Does Ide:

1a. Shoot the Ide-thing.

Outcome: Ide raises her bow, and releases a piercing dart of light into the thing's chest. The Ide-thing, a perfect mirror, does the same. Both stagger back as they are struck, clutching their wounds.

Aldric leaps forward, putting a hand on Ide's shoulder. "You must treat it as you would wish to be treated, girl." And he kneels before the Ide-thing, bowing his head in respect. Ide, after a beat, does the same.

The thing straightens with great dignity, looking upon them. Then it, too, kneels-- but only to place a hand on the platform. The chains begin to grind, and the platform rises.

--hp?

1b. Greet the Ide-thing.

Outcome: Ide pauses, then sticks out a hand. The Ide-thing does the same, and awkwardly, they shake hands.

"I--" Ide says, throat unexpectedly tight. "I don't know you very well, but... I hope to make you great, one day."

The Ide-thing nods, and kneels, and places a hand on the platform. The chains begin to grind, and Aldric clambers on as it rises. As the Ide-thing straightens, it presses something into her palm.

+1 relic (special relic--"mirror's blessing" or sth like that)

2. Send Aldric forth to activate the chains.

Outcome: Aldric steps forward onto the platform, and presses his hand into the indent. The statue seems to shiver, before it straightens, morphs and stands in front of Aldric-- a perfect white replica of the soldier himself. Aldric draws his sword in surprise, and the thing does the same. There is something incredibly off-putting about it.

Does Ide:

2a. Strike the Aldric-thing.

Outcome: Aldric raises his blazing sword and brings it down upon the thing in front of him. In unison, the Aldric-thing does the same. Both stagger back as they are struck, clutching their wounds.

Ide leaps forward, grabbing Aldric's arm. "You may want to kill him, but I need him--and you--whole. Be gracious to yourself." And she goes to the Aldric-thing, and grips its shoulder warmly. Aldric, after a beat, does the same.

The thing relaxes, and leans into their touch. Then it lifts its sword, and plunges it into the platform. The chains begin to grind, and the platform rises.

--hp?

2b. Greet the Aldric-thing.

Outcome: Aldric pauses, then sticks out a hand. The Aldric-thing does the same, and awkwardly, they shake hands.

"I--" Aldric says, throat unexpectedly tight. "I forgive you."

The Aldric-thing relaxes, as though a great weight had been lifted from it. Then it lifts its sword, and plunges it into the platform. Ide leaps on as it begins to rise, and notices that once the Aldric-thing sheaths its sword, it presses something into his palm.

+1 relic (special relic--"mirror's blessing" or sth like that)

Star Eater

ID: 032

Unique: Yes

Biome: Tower

Image Description:

Intro Text

The platform rises, rises, rises through the skylight in the courtyard. When at last it grinds to a halt, the adventurers find themselves standing at last at the top of the white tower.

Silver light bathes them, and all around, the moonlit mountains roll like waves. But the light at the top of the tower has a thin quality, flickering almost like a dying flame. The pair take a closer look at the white, glowing mass which takes up a large part of the tower's top-- and realize that they are not alone.

Silhouetted in front of what Aldric and Ide are coming to recognize as a star is a figure. It has a bulbous stomach, an impossibly wide mouth-- but its clothes are similar to their own. An adventurer, then, made corrupt in the presence of such a great power.

The thing does not appear to notice them. With one long-fingered hand, it plucks what remains of the star, and drops it into its gaping maw. The last of the tower's light vanishes.

The great mountain which braces the tower seems to shift. The top half of it shifts, rolls-- and then, impossibly-- opens its eyes. A voice like rolling thunder emanates from it, intoning three simple words.

"Give it back".

The tower leans, and the companions can see cracks spreading from beneath the bulbous thing's feet. Around them, the mountains shiver, and begin to break.

The thing steps toward Aldric and Ide, heading for the now-lowering platform and its escape. At last, it seems to spot them, and its grin widens, and widens, and widens, swallowed light spilling out-- and within moments, it is upon them.

Aldric and Ide must stop the Star Eater, for without the tower's star, the valley will crumble.

Choices:

fiGHT